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AUTHOR Medlin, William K.
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ABSTRACT

This book addresses the question of what kind of relationship between human beings and nature will best serve the interests of both. The history of Lassen Volcanic National Park in northeastern California illustrates how divergent views on this relationship have impacted the evolution of the American preservation and conservation movement. Prior to 1800, Native Americans had lived in this mountain wilderness for thousands of years. They referred to Lassen Peak as Fire Mountain, due to its volcanic activity. Their lifestyles made no noticeable impact on land, forest, or water. During the last half of the 19th century, the arrival of White settlers brought in its wake almost immediate degradation of the wilderness environment. At the expense of American Indian tribes and cultures, the new occupiers of the land set out to exploit its resources with no regard for the future. However, during the 20th century, the U.S. government has sought to halt degradation and to preserve, even restore, some of this wilderness by creating a national park. Chapter 1 begins with a description of the natural and cultural heritage of Fire Mountain, including the land use and life styles of the Native Americans who inhabited this area. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the many conflicts between white settlers and Native Americans over land use and describes the fate of Ishi, the last known survivor of the Yana-Yahi tribe. Chapter 3 examines the forces and political factors that led to creation of the National Park Service, set up by the federal government in 1916 to safeguard America's natural and cultural endowments. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 analyze the changes at Lassen Volcanic National Park from primitive wilderness to exploited land, to land used for educational and recreational programs, to land once again considered wilderness. Chapter 5 outlines the foundations and development of the park's outdoor education programs, which have focused on wildlife, geology, ecology, environmental awareness, and American Indian cultures. Contains 70 references. Includes maps and photographs. (LP)